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## EXEGESIS OF PSALM II. 7.

BY PROFESSOR O. S. STEARNS, D. D.,

Newton Theological Institute, Newton Centre, Mass.

## TRANSLATION.

Let me relate (the particulars), concerning a decree; (78, Ps. 69, 27);

Jehovah said unto me: "Thou art my Son,  
I have this day begotten thee."

To explain this verse, it is necessary to ascertain if possible, its historical ground-work. The Psalm is anonymous, and its authorship is therefore left to the conjectures of the critics. Yet to those who are sufficiently conservative to regard the writers of the New Testament as speaking with an inspired authority in such technical matters, it is suggestive at least that the revised text of Westcott and Hort, in the quotation of Ps. II. 1, 2 by Peter, (Acts IV. 25) assigns the authorship of the Psalm to David. The ordinary objection that when the writers of the New Testament refer a Psalm to David, they simply refer to him as a well-known writer of some of the Psalms, or as a synonym for the entire books of Psalms, just as we say, "Dr. Smith's Psalmist," thinking of him as compiler rather than as an author, will hardly bear a critical test. By tabulating the passages of David in the Psalms, we shall find that except Heb. IV. 7, when David is quoted as the author of an anonymous psalm, the titles as given in the Hebrew text agree with the statement of the writers of the Old Testament. Other quotations are general, either as in one case, specifying a psalm (Acts XIII. 33) or referring to the Psalms as a book. (Matt. XXVI. 30, Mark XIV. 26, 1 Cor. XIV. 26, Acts I. 20). With the exceptions named, the quotations from Psalms, whose superscriptions refer them to David, are suggestively emphatic as to his authorship. Quoting from Psalm CX. 1 our Lord in Matt. XXII. 43 says, "How then doth *David* in the spirit call him Lord?" In Mark XII. 36 he says, "David *himself* said in the Holy Spirit; and in Luke XX. 42, "For David *himself* says in the book of Psalms." In Acts II. 25, "David saith," quoting from Ps. XVI, where Peter declares that David spoke in this Psalm as a *prophet*; in Rom. IV. 6, "As David says," referring to Ps. XXXII. 1, 2; and in Rom. XI. 9, employing the language of Ps. LXIX. 23, 24, the superscriptions to the Psalms quoted from, assign authorship to David. In no instance except the one referred to (Heb. IV. 7), is there any disagreement between the writers of the

New Testament and the Hebrew text. This harmony does not seem to be accidental. On the other hand, it implies that Peter may have been accurate, when referring to the first two verses of the second Psalm, he says, "Who by the Holy Spirit by the *mouth of our father David, thy servant* did'st say, etc."

It will doubtless be objected to the Davidic authorship of the Psalm under consideration that its style is too artistic and finished to be credited to him. But the argument from style is a very precarious one. The author of Psalm XVIII, the grandest in the Psalter, might have composed Psalm II.

At any rate, the prophecy of Nathan to David, 2 Samuel, VII, and his troubles with the Syrians and Ammonites in their ineffectual revolt against him, (2 Sam. V, VIII, X) give a better occasion for the language of this Psalm, than any other which has been suggested. David desired to build a house for Jehovah. He was denied the privilege because he had been a man of war. David's throne, like Saul's, was *elective*, but the glory of an eastern monarch was that it should be hereditary: i. e. that his name should be *historic*.\* To make the phrase, "The throne of David," a synonym for the origin and glory of a nation would be sufficient for the ambition of any monarch. Solomon was not yet born. And Jehovah appears to David, through a vision given to Nathan, the prophet, to assure him that while his specific desire could not be gratified, he should receive something for transcending it. "When thy days are full, and thine host lain with thy fathers, then will I raise up thy seed after thee, which goeth out of thy loins, and will establish his kingdom forever. I will be to *him*, i. e., thy *seed*, for a *father*, and *he*, i. e., thy *seed*, shall be to *me* for a *son*." David bows reverently to this revelation, and accepts the promise as a sufficient substitute for his previously cherished purpose. With this promise, though his enemies array themselves against him, he might sing, "Why do the heathen rage," etc.?

Turning to Psalm LXXXIX, a Psalm evidently begotten by the perils of the exile, one cannot fail to feel the analogy between the language of the Psalmist, whoever he was, and this prophecy of Nathan to David. The larger part of the Psalm is virtually a paraphrase of that prophecy, and on that prophecy he rests his plea for the mercy of Jehovah to be shown to his people in perilous times. "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn unto David my servant; For even will I establish thy seed, and build up thy throne to all generations," vss. 3, 4.

\*See the Behistan Inscriptions. Records of the Past, vol. 1, page 167.

“Once have I sworn by thy holiness, I will not lie unto David ; His *seed* shall be forever, and his throne as the sun before me ; He shall be established forever as the moon, And (as the) faithful witness in the sky.” This language certainly coördinates with 2 Sam. vii, and implies that if David was the author of the second psalm, the thought of verse 7, while it did not find its verification in the peaceful reign of Solomon, could, as it did, find its verification in David’s seed, and, if the Psalm be Messianic, emphatically in David’s Lord.

But is the Psalm *Messianic*? If so, its Messianic character must modify the interpretation of verse 7, irrespective of authorship. What we have said as to the possibility of a Davidic authorship, seems to shed light upon the scenery of the Psalm. That is its chief value.

1. In favor of its Messianic character is the tradition of the Jews. (see commentaries *in loco*.) The later Rabbis, however, explain it as specially referring to David.

2. In the New Testament it is referred to as Messianic, not by way of accommodation, but as predictive, or typically predictive.—See Acts iv. 25—27, xiii. 33, Hebrews i. 5, v. 5.

Moreover the thought of verse 7, as referring to the Sonship of the Messiah, and as expressed in the New Testament, implies a higher meaning than could have been realized by a mere earthly monarch. Aside from Dan. vii. 13, and possibly Dan. iii. 25, it is the only specific passage in the Old Testament, to which the recognized fact in the New Testament of the genuine Sonship of Christ can be referred, see Matt. iii. 17 ; John i. 14, 49 ; Matt. xxvi. 63 ; Rom. i. 3 ; Heb. i. 5, v. 5 ; Acts, xiii. 33 ff.

3. The objections to the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm confirm it rather than invalidate it. (a) It is said that the Psalm refers solely to the reign of David. But it is inapplicable to David, because it portrays the mission of a king recently appointed, against whom the kings of the earth have rebelled, whereas David in the beginning of his reign was sovereign over only a part of the Jewish tribe, and had made as yet no foreign conquests. (b) It is said that the Psalm refers to the reign of Solomon. But his reign was eminently peaceful. His recorded history reveals no rebellion of special mark. As the head of a *seed*, it might pertain to him, but not to his specific reign. (c) It is said that the language with reference to Messiah’s enemies, (verse 9) is too severe and too strong to be applicable to Christ. But it is no stronger nor more severe than that of Christ himself, when speaking of His foes,

Matt. xxv. 46 ; Luke xix. 27 ; Rev. ii. 27, and xix. 15. Picturing a conqueror, the poet pictures him with the drapery of a conqueror.

Returning to our text, (verse 7) the words themselves seem adapted to this high Messianic idea. The poet, whoever he was, is transported in verse 4 from the wild tumults of earth to the serenity of heaven. Trampling hosts, and ministering armies and haughty princes are as nothing before Jehovah. The Ruler and Governor of the universe sitting calmly on his throne, laughs and continues to laugh, mocks and continues to mock at their mad designs. Such is the true force of the future tenses here. Then, **וְ** continuative, after he has despised and scorned them, as they, in verse 2, had jeered at him in their councils, he also will speak and terrify them with his hot majestic words. "The grand roll of "the original," says Perowne, "is like the roll of the thunder." In verse 6, **וְ** introduces the words of Jehovah, the word connective showing the contrast in the main thought, and emphasizing the position of the speaker, as if he said, "You have had *your* way, now *I* will have *mine*. I will put my king against your kings. I have established my king upon *Zion*; not merely Jerusalem, but the heavenly Zion, of which Jerusalem was merely a type." The scene is laid in heaven (verse 4), and the speaker in verse 7, is the Anointed One, relating the particulars concerning the kingdom of which he is the king. The position is conferred, not assumed. The speaker quotes the language of Jehovah as addressed to him. The two emphatic words are **אֲנִי** and **יִלְדֵּתִי**; equivalent to saying, "I, on my part, have begotten a son of *my own proper self*; i. e. of my own *nature*. Others are called my sons declaratively, or by adoption, but this one is to be just *like me*, the Monogones." In no other instance in the Old Testament is the verb **יָלַד** used to denote the begetting of a son by God. Messiah's mother is often spoken of, and as the descendant of David he is frequently mentioned, but here, as Mole remarks, "in a *determined* case some one has been placed in this relation by God himself, and indeed in the *history of revelation*." (See Pusey's Lectures on Daniel, p. 479.)

The word **הַיּוֹם** "this day," or "to-day," may signify that at this specific time Jehovah appointed him to the regal position, or that at this time he declared or manifested him as such. The tense of the verb **יָלַד** implies a completed act, either at a moment previous or at any time previous. See 1 Sam. x. 19 and xxvi. 19. So that the language in this verse implies simply this: "To-day it stands an accomplished fact that I have begotten thee" (Murphy). So far as the divine thought is con-

cerned, it may be eternal. God is timeless—so far as the manifestation of the fact is concerned, it might be in the theophanies of the Old Testament, or in the incarnation of the New Testament, crowned as was the latter, by the undeniable proof of His resurrection.

The verse therefore, by its historical setting, by its historical fulfillment, by its connection, and by peculiarity of language may be justly considered prophetically Messianic.

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## FIRST HEBREW BOOKS.

BY RABBI B. FELSENTHAL.

In the last number of *The Hebrew Student* there appeared under the above caption a short article which contains several inaccuracies. It is not correct that in Mantua the first Hebrew book was printed. Two other Italian cities can claim the honor of having had in their midst Hebrew printing establishments before Mantua had one, viz: Reggio, in Calabria, and Pieve di Sacco, in upper Italy. The earliest date in any printed Hebrew book is to be found in Rashi's Commentary to the Pentateuch, printed in Reggio, and finished, according to an epigraph therein, February 17, 1475. In the same year there was printed in *Pieve di Sacco* Jacob ben Asher's *Arba'ah Turim*, in 4 vols. It was finished July 3, 1475. But being bulky and voluminous, the work thereon must have been begun before 1475.

In the next year, in 1476, Abraham Kunat commenced to print Hebrew in *Mantua*, and soon thereafter other Hebrew printing establishments were called into existence in several other Italian cities. These presses were all very active, and about one hundred various works are known to have been issued from them between 1475 and 1500. Of these incunabulae we shall only enumerate here the biblical books and biblical commentaries, and we shall omit all others belonging to the provinces of law, philosophy, poetry, ritual, etc.

In *Mantua*, 1476, Ralbag's (Levi ben Gerson's) Commentary on the Pentateuch.

In *Ferrara*, 1477, Ralbag's Commentary on Job.

In *Bologna*, 1482, Pentateuch, with Onkelos Targum, and Rashi.

*Ibidem*, 1483, the five M'gilloth with Rashi.